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From the point of view of "historical research" it must be said that Mr. Elson has achieved a very indifferent success. As an example of the "art of historical composition" (Mr. Elson speaks of his attention to style three separate times in the preface) the book is equally open to attack. The immediate meaning is conveyed with sufficient clearness. There are, here and there, pages that are well done. But taken as a whole the style is without distinctive merit. It does not possess originality, dignity, force nor strict accuracy. Of more difficult attainments, such as logical continuity in sentence building, or coherence in paragraph construction, there is but little evidence.

The reviewer sympathizes with Mr. Elson's ambition, and has nothing but praise for his industry. But in all sincerity the reviewer believes that Mr. Elson has failed to realize the difficulty of the task or his own inability to perform it satisfactorily.

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The Opening of the Mississippi. A Struggle for Supremacy in the American Interior. By FREDERIC AUSTIN OGG. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1904. — 670 pp.

While the subject of this book is comparatively a narrow one, the treatment of it is such as to have broadened it, not "here and there" as the author remarks in his preface, but almost throughout, into "an attempted history of the Mississippi Valley." After a few introductory words about the importance of this region, Mr. Ogg devotes four chapters to the story of its discovery and exploration, with the great river as his central theme, more or less. He then describes the foundation of Louisiana, its place in the European issues of the eighteenth century, and the process by which the United States secured the free navigation of the Mississippi in 1795. The last two hundred pages of the work are given over to an account of the Louisiana Purchase, its immediate antecedents, and the establishment of American rule in the territory up to 1815. The text of this portion of the volume is little more than a series of abstracts from Henry Adams's work.

A fair judgment of a book that is at once more than "timely" and less than scholarly, is difficult to render. The ordinary paste pot and scissors are not much in evidence. The ambition of the author to rise beyond the level of mere "timeliness," his wide and industrious reading, and the copiousness of his references merit acknowledgment. The bracing of every important statement with a solid array of authorities is usually a sign of diligent research, but not always one of historical

utility. The citation of references in the book under consideration, inclusive even of "popular histories," text-books and journalistic productions, is pedantic at times to the extent that, apparently, Mr. Ogg has wished to mention almost all works ever written on the particular topic. Mere lists of books in foot-notes are obtrusive and wearisome enough to the general reader, and not at all satisfactory to him who may wish to broaden his reading intelligently. The scholar, on his part, demands a careful discrimination in the selection of materials, and a proper personal estimate of the value of each authority consulted.

The book abounds in explanations of trite facts and in more or less irrelevant digressions on the general history of the Mississippi region, the English colonies and international affairs in Europe. Nor are positive errors infrequent. To mention a few examples of such defects: the account given of the Indian troubles in the West after 1763 is interesting, but not pertinent to the main theme. The same might be said of the rather unctuous recital of the Napoleonic "bath-tub episode" (pp. 523-28). There was no struggle between Frederick the Great and Maria Theresa over the claim of the latter to the "Austrian throne" (p. 245). The "prime objects" of the British government in 1755, with all their warlike aspects, are attributed to that pacific statesman, Walpole (p. 267). Joseph de Galvez, the uncle, and not the father of Bernardo de Galvez, is represented as being the viceroy of Mexico and the president of the Council of the Indies at the same time (p. 367). Errors are common in the statements concerning the Family Compact of 1761 (pp. 286-87), the cession of Louisiana to France in the following year (pp. 287-88), and the share of Wilkinson in the intrigues for severing the West from the Union (pp. 442-44). "The province of Louisiana," also, was not "destined to be handed back and forth among the nations yet several times," after 1762, "before it should find its permanent place under the flag of the United States" (p. 341). It was "handed forth" but once.

Whatever value the book possesses lies merely in its attempted concentration and combining of various well-known facts in the treatment of a single topic. Had the author confined himself strictly to that topic, and converted his bibliographical foot-notes into critical appreciations of his authorities, *The Opening of the Mississippi* might have been a useful addition to the literature of American history.

WILLIAM R. SHEPHERD.